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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3674
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INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE
RHMFISS/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0642

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OUAGADOUGOU 000404

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [UNSC](#) [SENV](#) [ZI](#) [IV](#) [UV](#)

SUBJECT: UN SEC GEN DISCUSSES REGIONAL, GLOBAL ISSUES WITH UNSC
NON-PERMANENT MEMBER BURKINA FASO

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On April 22-24, U.N. Secretary General (UNSG) Ban Ki Moon visited Burkina Faso as part of a regional tour including Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, and Liberia. With President Compaore, the Secretary General discussed:

- Cote d'Ivoire peace process (praising Compaore's leadership),
- Regional security (Mali, Niger, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Central African Republic; arms and drugs trafficking),
- Zimbabwe (credibility of African leaders at stake); -- Rising living costs (global problem with no quick fixes); and,
- Climate change (which could destabilize countries like Burkina Faso e.g. because of desertification).

Ban Ki Moon's spouse met with Burkina Faso's first lady to discuss development assistance to women and children. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) During an April 22-24 visit to Ouagadougou, UNSG Ban Ki Moon discussed a variety of regional and global issues with Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore. Ban Ki Moon visited Ouagadougou because Burkina Faso has a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2008-2009, and because of President Compaore's position as current President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Facilitator of the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) for Cote d'Ivoire. Ban Ki Moon raised with Compaore, and separately with Prime Minister Tertius Zongo, the Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction, good governance, and the following regional and global issues:

Cote d'Ivoire Peace Process

¶3. (SBU) Ban Ki Moon publicly lauded Compaore's role as OPA Facilitator of the Cote d'Ivoire peace process. While UNSG was optimistic about the process because of Compaore's involvement, he noted the urgent need for additional resources to finance Presidential elections set for November 30. MOFA Cabinet Director Vincent Zakane told PAO and PolOff April 28 that there had already been pledges from France, China, and 22 other nations, but that the GOCI could not bear the entire costs of holding elections, and thus was seeking more donor aid.

¶4. (SBU) The Cote d'Ivoire Government has also incurred administrative costs and issues such as those associated with the identification process that will need to be completed before the elections, Zakane added. In this regard, U.N Country Representative Babacar Cisse told Ambassador April 29 that the French operator, SAGEM, had asked Cote d'Ivoire for about 60 million USD and nine months to produce ID and voter registration cards -- a figure and timeframe that Cisse thought were high. Cisse recalled that in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country with three times the population of Cote d'Ivoire, this process had only cost the government USD 50 million dollars, using a different company.

Regional Security in West Africa, Sudan

15. (SBU) Compaore raised with Ban Ki Moon the Tuareg situations in Mali and Niger, as well as political tensions in Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and the Central African Republic, Zakane said. Compaore and the UNSG noted an increase in arms and drug trafficking in the region. They called for increased regional cooperation to address this problem, which is being exacerbated by Libya and Algeria, who sell arms to opposing rebellion groups. Finally, UNSG noted with satisfaction Burkina's participation in UN peacekeeping operations on the African continent.

Zimbabwe: Mugabe Hurts Credibility of African Leaders

16. (SBU) Ban Ki Moon also discussed the elections in Zimbabwe by phone on April 22 with A.U. chairperson Professor Alpha Konare, Cisse told Ambassador. UNSG told Compaore that, although Zimbabwe has nothing to do with West Africa, the elections there would affect the entire continent. Because of President Mugabe's refusal to recognize the results of the first round of Presidential elections, the credibility of African leaders was at stake. Compaore responded with concern that the involvement of other southern African leaders, such as South African President Thabo Mbeki, had only contributed to the problem. Compaore suggested instead that the issue be brought before the African Union's Peace and Security Commission.

The Rising Cost of Living: No Quick Regional Fixes

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17. (U) Both UNSG and Compaore agreed that current skyrocketing prices of basic food goods and gasoline, along with a decrease in global cotton prices, were a poor combination for Burkina Faso and other countries in the region. The crisis has the potential to destabilize many nations, and in particular to undermine Burkina Faso's efforts to combat poverty and promote development. Ban Ki Moon assured his Burkinabe interlocutors of the UN's assistance in addressing these challenges, adding, however, that populations must realize that the problem was global and not local. Its solution must also be global and durable, Ban Ki Moon said, not the product of quick-fixes from individual governments such as tax breaks, which can deplete needed resources for social services. In June, the UNSG will meet in Rome at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to discuss these issues with a task force composed of FAO, IMF, the European Economic Community, and others.

Climate Change: Destabilizing Burkina Faso?

18. (U) UNSG and Compaore also shared concerns about the negative impact of climate change on the environment. Both stressed that the climate change had exacerbated drought and desertification and caused human suffering. Additionally, it had seriously affected agricultural production in Burkina Faso. Ban Ki Moon disclosed that this situation could have destabilizing affects on countries like Burkina Faso. The two discussed the need for increasing financing for research and development, and finding alternative sources of energy.

Madame Ban Ki Moon Met with Burkina's First Lady

19. (U) While her husband was busy meeting with Burkinabe senior authorities, Madame Yoo Ban Soon Taek met with first lady Madame Chantal Compaore. Madame Compaore briefed her guest on the social and economic conditions of women and children in Burkina Faso. (Note. Burkina Faso's widespread illiteracy, negative social and cultural attitudes towards women, and abject poverty are impediments to the emergence of female political and economic leadership. End

Note). Madame Yoo Ban Soon Taek visited a handicraft training center for women in Ouagadougou to see some of Burkina's efforts to promote women and children. Following their meeting, Madame Yoo Ban Soon Taek promised to look at the possibility to have partnership with the Suka Foundation for women and children that Madame Compaore has been running.

JACKSON